



**Office of the Attorney General
Paul G. Summers**

CONSUMER ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 7, 2004

#04-26

CONTACT:

Sharon Curtis-Flair

(615) 741-5860

**ATTORNEY GENERAL WARNS OF INTERNATIONAL
LOTTERY SCHEME**

Tennessee Attorney General Paul G. Summers warns consumers about an international lottery fraud that has recently targeted Tennesseans.

Letters purporting to be from the El Gordo Sweepstakes Lottery Company, S.L. in Madrid, Spain have appeared in some Tennessee mailboxes, informing consumers that they have won hundreds of thousands of dollars. Consumers are told in the letter that "Due to the mix up of some numbers and names, we ask that you keep this award from public notice . . ." and are instructed to contact a "claims agent" at an overseas telephone number.

"As with many schemes of this nature, consumers are asked to provide their bank account information along with the names, phone numbers and addresses of relatives," Attorney General Summers said. "Additionally, consumers are instructed to pay an advance fee to cover various administrative costs.

"Unfortunately, if you give someone you don't know access to your personal information, they are then able to steal your identity, your money and even borrow money, all in your name. Never share confidential personal information with companies or individuals you do not know."

The fraudulent activity has adopted the name of Spain's largest lottery prize, "El Gordo," to confuse potential victims. The scam even uses actual addresses of official Spanish organizations to make the lottery seem legitimate.

A sweepstakes announcement from LuckyDay International in Amsterdam, Netherlands is also currently circulating. The LuckyDay notice is similar in form and substance to the El Gordo letter.

Attorney General Summers offers the following tips to avoid becoming a victim:

- *Never give your credit card, bank account, or Social Security Number unless you are familiar with the company and know why the information is necessary.
- *Legitimate lotteries do not ask winners to pay out money in order to collect winnings.

*Legitimate El Gordo lottery tickets can only be purchased from authorized sellers in Spain. If you have not purchased a ticket, you have not won a prize in the lottery.

If you have received one of these sweepstakes or lottery announcements, or one similar, you may want to contact your local Postmaster to file a complaint against the company. You may also file a complaint with the Division of Consumer Affairs by calling (615) 741-4737 or toll-free 1(800) 342-8385, or online at www.state.tn.us/consumer.